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Community members offer counter protest outside Lafayette Elementary School

By Sharon K. Sobotta



Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

Those who traveled down Moraga Road on May 19 to fetch their children from Lafayette Elementary School were greeted with bouquets of rainbow-colored balloons, rainbow pride flags and more than a dozen people offering affirmative messages of support for students of all gender identities and LGBTQ+ youth. Since the Lafayette School District displayed the Transgender Flag for Transgender Day of Visibility in late March, a small group has shown up every Friday afternoon in opposition of the District's handling of transgender inclusive practices.

Justine Parmelee is a mother of a cisgender boy in the community, but says she sees it as her job to stand up for other youth in the community who may feel targeted. "We're here because we care about LGBTQIA students and we want to protect trans youth." Parmelee says she wants to challenge the narrative that cisgendered boys and girls are no longer safe if transgender rights are acknowledged or celebrated. "My cisgendered son celebrates diversity and really does care about all kids at school."

Robbie Peacock, a straight white man, wore a shirt emblazoned with the word 'HUMAN' in rainbow colors, while waving a flag and walking his 4- and 8-year-old sons home from school. "(We wanted to counter the) small handful of people that have very hateful messages

and show the community that we actually care. (We want to tell LGBTQ+ youth that) we see you, we know you are here. And we are always going to be here to support you," Peacock says. "(The message for those who hold signs of opposition) comes from a bumper sticker I saw. Acknowledging someone else's rights doesn't take away from yours. It's not pie."

Pam Dawkins is a member of the local PFLAG chapter - the largest organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQ+ people and their families. Dawkins' reason for showing up is simple. "Everybody needs to be involved," Dawkins says. "You can't just sort of walk by and think someone else will take care of it. It's like the anti-racism work we do in our community. You can't be complacent. You have to be active."

Dawkins says there will be community-wide opportunities specific to LGBTQ+ allyship during the second annual Lafayette Community Day on June 3. The city will raise the Pride Flag in front of Sideboard restaurant at 8:30 a.m. and the PFLAG group and volunteers will be focusing on the parking lot across from LES, the site of the weekly demonstrations.

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